

providing a future with hope

The Challenger
is a publication
of Life Challenge of
Southeastern Michigan

Challenger

enlightening empowering equipping

OCTOBER 2008

Water-Walking

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

Jonny is teaching me about prayer. Jonny is my four-year-old. Every night I tuck him in bed. First I read a Bible story, then we pray. Here is a sampling of some of Jonny's prayers:

- *"Dear God, please help Grandpa's fingers to grow back."* (My dad lost two of his fingers in a table-saw accident four years ago.)
- *"God, help Aunt Danny get younger."* (Aunt Danny is Johnny's 94-year-old great, great aunt. He wants the process of aging reversed in Aunt Danny so she can get around better.)
- *"Dear God, please help Uncle Jerry to leave heaven."* (I asked Johnny what he meant by that. Uncle Jerry died two years ago. Johnny said he wanted to see Uncle Jerry again . . . in this world.)
- *"Jesus, please help the grass to get green."* (Johnny has seen what a few dry months can do to Daddy's precious lawn!)
- *"And God, please heal my bloody nose."* (By bloody he means "runny.")

No inhibitions. No reservations. No pretenses. No beating-around-the-bush. No matter too big; no matter too small. Just simple, child-like faith: "God, I've got a problem, and now I need you to fix it."

Out of the mouths of babes.

One of the more popular stories in the Gospels is about Jesus walking on water (see Mt. 14:22 ff.). After a long day of ministry, Jesus dismisses the crowd, sends His disciples to the other side of the lake in a boat, while He takes off to pray on a mountainside.

The disciples get caught in an unexpected storm at

sea. As they fight to keep afloat, Jesus walks out to them and greets them.

At this, the disciples freak-out (who wouldn't?). They think they're seeing a ghost. Jesus reassures them that it is truly Him. Peter (perhaps not thinking, . . . he tended to have this problem) blurts out, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water."

At this point I imagine Jesus smiling from ear to ear thinking, "Well Peter, you asked for it." So He replies, "Come on down!" Amazingly, Peter does just that. He gets out of the boat and starts walking toward Jesus.

We all know what happens. Peter gets his eyes off Jesus and starts sinking. Jesus subsequently grabs him by the hand and rebukes him, "O you of little faith!"

What I find most unusual about this story is NOT the fact of Jesus walking on the water (although that is pretty cool). It is NOT the fact that nobody else had

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enough nerve to join Peter and Jesus on the water (the chance of a lifetime!). And it is NOT the fact that as soon as Jesus entered the boat, the boat immediately reached the shore where they were heading (talk about speed boating!).

What strikes me is Peter's request. It is so outrageous. Nowhere else in the Scriptures is there record of anyone ever walking on water prior to this account. Maybe Peter didn't know that (probably a good thing, what we know typically hurts us). Whatever the reason, he boldly and straightforwardly asks to join Jesus on the water, and Jesus responds with a hearty: "Amen!"

I have to ask myself: What requests do we fail to make of Christ for want of faith and imagination? What opportunities for growth and adventure (disguised as problems) do we forfeit because of shortsightedness and insecurity?

What requests do we fail to make of Christ for want of faith and imagination?

We need to get our feet wet.

We need to dream more boldly and make such childish, fool-hardy requests. We need to learn something from Jonny and Peter.

Our God is both good and great. He loves showering us with good things, AND He is fully capable of doing so.

There's a story (probably apocryphal) about Alexander the Great. He had a general whose daughter was getting married. Alexander valued this soldier greatly and offered to pay for the wedding. When the general gave Alexander's steward the bill, it was an enormous amount of money. The steward came to Alexander and named the sum. To his surprise, Alexander smiled and said, "Pay it! Don't you see—by asking me for such an enormous sum he does me great honor. He shows that he believes I am both rich *and* generous.

Are we insulting God by our small ambitions and low expectations?

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*"Expect great things from God;  
attempt great things for God."  
(William Carey, 1761-1834)*

## Testimony

### Hilary Robison

"I grew up in a loving Christian family. We went on vacations and outings all the time. We attended church every Sunday. I was active in youth group and went to summer church camp.

In high school I struggled with low self-esteem. I had an overwhelming feeling of being overweight and unattractive. I was extremely critical of myself. I became depressed and angry.

Instead of turning to Jesus, I started associating with kids who were smoking and drinking. I did whatever they did, trying to fit in. Getting high was a release for me and made me feel better about myself.

After finishing high school I went on to nursing school. At the age of 21, I got involved in a serious relationship. My boyfriend moved in with me, and we began going to bars regularly and using drugs.

I got pregnant and had a son. This should have been the happiest time of my life, but I was miserable. The only time I felt good was when I was high.

I got hooked on Oxycontin, a powerful narcotic for pain. I could not function without using. Every cent of my paycheck went toward supporting my habit.

On the verge of losing everything, I tried to get clean. I moved back in with my parents. I was able to function for a short period of time. I still thought, however, that I could get high once in a while. I was desperately wrong. All it took was one time for me to slip, and I was back on the same destructive path for another year-and-a-half.

In 2007, at the age of 28, I was completely drained. I knew that if I did not get help I would end up dead. I called my mom. She gave me the number to the Teen Challenge Crisis Center in Youngstown, Ohio. I called them, and they directed me to Life Challenge. They told me Life Challenge was a one-year Christian program that focused on developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I knew that this was what I needed.

When I walked through the doors of Life Challenge I immediately felt at peace – something I had not felt since I was a little child.

I learned so much in one year. Everyday either in

chapel or class, the Bible became more real to me. I came to understand what it meant to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

God was so merciful to me. He daily renewed my mind and my heart. He gave me hope and filled me with joy. I now live by faith and not by sight.

I graduated Life Challenge in May of 2008. I returned to my home in Pennsylvania and have gone back to work as a registered nurse. In July, I was granted primary custody of my son. I am attending a local church where I am involved in Sunday school. I plan on joining the choir this fall. I thank God for Life Challenge and for His amazing grace, mercy, and love."



## FAREWELL

Bob Carey, who has served as Assistant to the Executive Director, has accepted the directorship of Delaware Teen Challenge where he will commence duties later this month. He has been a faithful laborer serving in multiple capacities (e.g., Men's Division Supervisor, Events Coordinator, Public Relations Director, etc.) for over 12 years. He and his wife, Cristina, along with their three children, Sarah, Nathan, and Daniel, will be greatly missed.

I was on the phone the other day with a graduate of our ministry. He was marveling at the grace of God: "I used to lie in bed at night begging God to let me die in my sleep. Now, the first thing I do when I wake up is talk to God and thank Him for another day!"

Friends, we exist to help men and women bound by life-controlling addictions find freedom through Jesus Christ. Your prayers and financial support make this possible. Thanks!

Together for souls,

*Jeff*